

Submission
No 303

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially Confidential

I have had some experience with Crown land being converted into National Park. For approximately 15 years my parents owned a property at the rear of Uffington State Forest, located near Clarencetown, NSW.

For the majority of this time the land was state forest, and whilst there was no budget for the forestry dept to maintain the access road through the forest which was used by a number of private residents along with my parents and I, my parents and the other residents would put in their own money with the approval of the forestry department and pay for a local earthmoving company to tend to the access road. The forestry was also regularly used on the weekends by 4WD vehicles and motorcyclists, the majority of which were registered and legal, the minority of which were not.

About 2008 Uffington State Forest became Columbey National Park. Shortly after my parents and some of the other private residents living nearby had a meeting with the ranger responsible for the National Park. The ranger advised he had a minimal budget and that the access road to the private properties at the rear of the National Park which was also one of the main access roads into the National Park would not be maintained for some time.

The previous arrangement the residents had had with the State Forest was put to the Ranger, they were advised as the local earthmoving company was not accredited and as a result would not be permitted to conduct earthworks within the National Park. Enquiries were made as to whether the local earthmoving company could become accredited however the Ranger didn't know and to my knowledge never replied with an answer or followed it up.

After only one year of being a National Park the access road and indeed all of the roads within the Park were in worse condition than when it had been State Forest. This was largely due to the continued use of the Park by recreational vehicles without any road maintenance being completed by the National Parks. Several calls/complaints were made to the National Park regarding the access road with the replies basically stating it was not the responsibility of the National Parks to maintain an access road to private property and in fact if the road was too bad the National Park could close the road for rehabilitation effectively isolating all private residents from their homes.

Whilst this was acknowledged and understood what was maddening to the local residents is the fact for years they had effectively maintained the road themselves and that option was still available, yet because of red tape and a lack of funds the National Parks were unable to do anything about it.

In the end my parents couldn't handle the poor condition of the road any more and moved elsewhere. This was largely in part due to the National Parks handling of the Park.

I don't believe that National Parks as an organisation is to blame for this, I believe that the Forestry should have been left as Forestry. It was obvious from the first meeting with the National Parks they did not have the time, money or resources to manage the Forest and as a result the Forest suffered.

As a recreational 4WD vehicle and trailbike motorcycle rider within Crown lands I am not opposed to the conversion of Crown Land into National Parks however I believe the

conversion should only occur if it can be shown the conversion will be for the benefit of the land and the National Parks can effectively manage the land.

Too often I hear stories of crown land previously used by recreational vehicles for years without problem or incident being converted into National Parks only to have the land closed to the recreational vehicle users for rehabilitation. Whilst I acknowledge this does need to occur on occasion, it seems it is more common within National Parks as unless the Park is a tourist attraction where time, money and resources seem to be allocated, the Parks staff are unable to maintain the land and prevent it from getting to the state where it requires rehabilitation.

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